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ABSTRACT

The modern library is an institution that supplies many information services by efficiently organizing universal knowledge that has been reduced to the printed word. Unfortunately, the Latin American countries have not developed centralized services and programs with respect to bibliography, cataloging, exchange, reprography, production of library technical manuals, or efficient book publication. Neither have public or private institutions been established to facilitate the words of the librarian. There is a critical need to accelerate the training of professional library personnel through new programs with multiplier effect on personnel training and the preparation of more and better library science teachers. In addition to personnel training, the most important aspect in library development is national planning and development of libraries. The first priority with regard to type of libraries is the library as it relates to education. Plans call for library training programs, concentrated initially in the Inter-American Library School in Medellin, Columbia. Fellowships and technical assistance will be provided in the form of teachers and subsidies for the libraries, as well as teaching equipment and materials. A committee will be appointed to advise the Organization of American States (OAS) with regard to the Medellin School and other librarian training programs. (Author/NH)

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ANALYSIS

OF THE LIBRARY SITUATION

IN LATIN AMERICA

1969

By the

Library Development Program
of the General Secretariat
of the O.A.S.

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ANALYSIS OF THE LIBRARY SITUATION IN LATIN AMERICA, 1969*

The modern library is an institution that supplies many information services by efficiently organizing universal knowledge that has been reduced to the printed word. Intellectual organization of the accumulation of knowledge and data is perhaps one of the most critical and complex problems faced by modern man.

Latin America's basic problem is that, in general, it has not had even the minimum number of libraries needed for its development. Without examining the reasons, it may be said that institutional libraries that could make an effective contribution to ensuring the public access to sources of information and knowledge either have not yet been established or have not been improved to the extent necessary to absorb the revolution in communication media. Regional scientific and technological development and application of technology to industrialization have been deferred for lack of access to scientific information. The efficient organization of books in libraries depends almost entirely upon the knowledge, judgment, ability, and training of the librarians. The library's usefulness depends more upon the attitude of the personnel in terms of service than upon internal organization and the quality of the collection.

To ensure the best use of scarce personnel and funds, national central offices must be set up to coordinate and develop the different types of libraries, as well as the collections of books to be lent to the various libraries of the inter-American system. This requires national library planning and the development of both national and regional capacity to solve national and regional problems.

Although, by law, some national libraries are responsible for the development of public an school libraries, none has the funds and personnel necessary to fulfill this aim. In some countries, an office within the ministry of education has been responsible for the development of school libraries. Usually, these offices do not have sufficient professional personnel or funds to perform the services needed. The great shortage of public and school libraries has been detrimental to the true functions of the national libraries, which have had to serve as school libraries.

Such service has been performed at great expense and has undermined the national libraries capacity for conducting research and centralizing some services that could be useful to all libraries in the country.

Unfortunately, the Latin American countries have not developed centralized services and programs with respect to bibliography, cataloging, exchange, reprography, production of library technical manuals, or efficient book publication. Neither have public or private institutions been established to facilitate the work of the librarian, without which he is unable to function efficiently.

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* Taken from the Library Development Program report appearing in the Consolidated Proposed Programs and Budgets of the General Secretariat of the OAS, Biennium 1970/72, with Projections of Activities and Expenditures for 1972/76.

TRAINING OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL

Probably the most serious problem is the lack of trained personnel, able to undertake national and regional planning of the various types of libraries and services necessary at all levels and in every specialized field that the library world presently requires.

The number of librarians needed for the present population is the most important factor, with regard to the OAS programs. If it is considered that one librarian is needed for every 1,000 elementary and secondary school students, 35,282 school librarians would be necessary. To furnish each secondary school with one librarian would require 26,513 librarians; for each elementary school to have a teacher-librarian, 270,996 professionals would be needed. Based on the essential ratio of one librarian to every 150 university students, 10,851 university librarians are needed.

For an adequate supply of material to the Latin American reading public, it is estimated that 51,406 librarians are needed, at the rate of one for every 2,000 readers. The present assumed shortage is 30,678 librarians. In the projection of needs for the year 1970, the shortage is 38,000, and for 1975, it is estimated at 49,874. In 1967, the number of students enrolled in library science schools in Brazil was 1,099, with a total of 290 students taking professional training in the third and final year. According to the 7,795 shortage estimated by Brazil, about 3 percent of the librarians needed in 1960 were being trained each year.

Most of the personnel now working in libraries has not had a minimum of technical training and lacks sufficient academic preparation to enroll in library science schools. Nevertheless, in view of the scarcity of professional librarians, it is even more urgent to prepare programs for training library assistants.

According to the statistics of 39 schools and courses for librarians offered in Latin America, the situation is as follows:

- Permanent schools offering courses culminating in a bachelor's degree	11
- Permanent schools offering other degrees	25
- Regular courses at the postsecondary level; no degree	3
- Regular courses at the secondary level	3
- Specialized regular courses	2
- Occasional short courses	38
- Graduate schools (only in Puerto Rico)	1
- Graduate courses	6
- Schools that can expand to the graduate level with aid	4

Information is lacking on conditions in most of the schools. Only two schools in Latin America and Puerto Rico are known to have a full-time director and four to have some full-time teachers. Of the 39 offering degrees, only 11 are considered to have adequate libraries. About five schools and courses offer scholarships.

Only in the last 10 years has it been possible to introduce in some of the library schools the requisite of four years of university study as the minimum for training professional librarians.

Of the 39 schools at the postsecondary level, only four could be considered capable of advancing to the graduate level, by offering within five or six years the two training levels; four additional ones might include some graduate courses with technical assistance and other aid.

NATIONAL PLANNING OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Most important for better use of resources are national planning of library services, consolidation at the national level of development of the various types of libraries and various common services that can facilitate the work of individual libraries. Complete library systems must be set up instead of establishing isolated libraries or even providing large scale assistance to individual libraries.

With regard to the extent of development in national planning and the degree of progress in planning, the general evaluation by library associations is as follows:

EXTENT OF NATIONAL LIBRARY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT

	National general plan	Library Plan				
		School	University	Specialized	Public	General outlook
High-level planning countries	4	5	5	2	4	3
Intermediate-level countries	3	6	5	5	6	7
Low-level countries	13	9	10	13	10	10

It has not been possible to evaluate the level of development of libraries and of national planning of libraries in the various countries with regard to their general progress or the percentage of gross national product invested in education and libraries.

Development of school and university libraries

Reliable data on libraries in Latin America are scarce and it was impossible to obtain any for the English-speaking Caribbean countries. In 1960, it was ascertained that there were 2,752 school libraries with a minimum of 500 volumes for the 289,000 primary and secondary schools, or less than one for every 100 schools. Only 245 libraries had more than 1,000 volumes. In the secondary schools, only 15 percent had libraries and 1.2 percent had more than 1,000 volumes. The number of books per student in secondary schools was 1.1, as compared to the minimum of 10 established by the American Association

of School Libraries, and the minimum of three accepted in Puerto Rico, and a minimum of 5,000 books per school regardless of the number of students.

In 1965, the institutions of higher learning, including normal schools, reported the existence of 618 libraries in the 1,385 institutions. Data on certain countries reveal the following: Brazil, 620 institutions, 128 libraries, 1,404,000 volumes; Colombia, 101 institutions, 87 libraries, 926,000 volumes; Honduras, six institutions, three libraries, 5,000 volumes; Mexico, 103 institutions, 81 libraries, 940,000 volumes. Applying the standards accepted for university libraries of a minimum of 75,000 volumes, regardless of the number of students, these 830 centers would require 62,250,000 volumes instead of the 3,275,000 now available in the higher institutions of these four countries.

Development of common services

Mention has already been made of the lack of common services provided by official agencies or by commercial enterprises to facilitate sound library operation. No country has a national cataloging and classification service, although most of the countries have cataloging sources that could be used for this purpose. However, some countries have agencies capable of furnishing national cataloging services with some technical assistance and equipment for reproduction of cards for all libraries.

Only one country maintains a cooperative cataloging program and a national union catalog of books. This is also the only country that has tried to develop a national procurement plan to ensure a copy of all the books required by the country, although this plan has not been implemented.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Owing to the complicated features of the libraries and to the almost total lack of the library services required in all countries, the Library Development Program, in order to promote their development, must undertake first the activities that will be of maximum benefit to the largest number of libraries, instead of considering the specific assistance needs of the different libraries. At the same time, support will be provided for the national and regional centers and agencies that are contributing or will be able to contribute to the rapid development of Latin America.

TRAINING OF LIBRARIANS

There is an obviously critical need to accelerate the training of professional library personnel through new programs with a multiplier effect on personnel training and the preparation of more and better library science teachers, if quantitative needs are to be met even partially on the basis of regular courses. Eleven countries have library schools that need technical assistance, the provision of teachers, and subsidies for improvement of their libraries.

At least 10 of the countries will have to depend for a long time on training facilities provided by schools and courses in other countries.

PLANNING OF LIBRARY SERVICES

In addition to personnel training, the most important aspect in library development is pehaps national planning and development of libraries. There must be an expansion of regional capacity to train the many librarians required for national planning, management of the consolidated national offices of the various types of library service and of the libraries themselves, bibliographic compilation, and teaching of library science.

DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

The first priority with regard to type of libraries is the library as it relates to education. Consequently, attention will be given to the development of university libraries in order to strengthen the contribution of the library to improvement of the universities. Thirteen countries have school libraries that could be incorporated into library systems, all of which will require technical assistance and personnel training for better operation.

All of the countries could utilize technical assistance to coordinate university libraries. With technical assistance, it would be possible to prepare and develop cooperative programs at the national level in 14 countries. Eleven countries have specialized libraries that are also able to carry out national and international cooperation programs. In 10 countries, there are specialized libraries which, with technical assistance, could serve as regional libraries.

COMMON SERVICES

The transmission of scientific information currently depends largely on the facilities of university and specialized libraries. It is necessary to develop union catalogs in order to insure maximum utilization of national resources. Over a period of time, the facilities of specialized and scientific libraries in the hemisphere will be observed with a view to having them serve as regional libraries in their specialized field in the areas of greatest interest to the OAS.

PROGRAM WORK PLAN

The activities proposed in this program budget for the 1970/76 period are considered essential in order to further development of the various types of libraries and, at the same time, initiate basic training of personnel for countries that will eventually be able to follow this example or emphasize certain types of libraries, as for example school libraries. Certain activities with a multinational perspective, such as possible incorporation of the Medellin School within the system of regional training centers and the basic study on preparing a list of books for university libraries, will contribute to improving the libraries in all member states.

Two activities that will serve as a point of departure under the program are aid to the Medellin School for training of librarians, according to the needs of the Latin American countries, and experimentation with the pilot country in its national planning of libraries, emphasizing those libraries most directly relating to education, that is, school and university libraries.

Therefore, work will be based on the areas of concentration of the Program for Development of School and University Libraries assigned top priority: national planning and the administrative and consolidated organization of library services, and training of personnel at all levels and for all services.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

Technical assistance

Consultation and advisory services will be provided under the regular program, and resources of the Technical Assistance Program and the Special Funds for Educational and Scientific Development will be used to send technical assistance missions for limited periods, first to the governments for national planning and the establishment of centralized services and then to the various institutions.

Training

Plans call for training programs that will include regular regional courses, as well as specialized and advanced courses, and courses for training assistants in the Latin American schools, concentrated initially in the Inter-American Library School in Medellin, Colombia. Fellowships and technical assistance will be provided in the form of teachers and subsidies for the libraries, as well as teaching equipment and materials.

In connection with training, the Medellin School will perform a dual function: to train librarians from countries with no schools of their own and to give the specialized and advanced regional courses required by all the countries. The School will also be used for meetings of experts in the teaching of library science and for basic studies and field research.

Fellowships will be awarded, particularly to the personnel that will participate in national planning and will be responsible for providing centralized services to school and university libraries.

In order to improve the teaching of library science in all countries, it is proposed to evaluate existing schools by experts in order to gauge the extent of attainment of the "Standards of Medellin" (developed under a special project of the School) and to determine which centers are able to convert to

graduate schools; to review these standards on the basis of progress made, especially with respect to the transmission of information; to establish the standards for courses to train library assistants, by means of another "round table;" to take steps designed to furnish the external aid needed by many schools to improve their current conditions, and to implement a special two- to three-year project for teachers of library schools at all levels.

A committee will be appointed to advise the OAS with regard to the Medellin School and other librarian training programs.